

SOC196H1 S – Introduction to Arab Majority Societies

Winter 2025

Schedule: Wednesday, 11:10 AM – 1:00 PM

Location: See ACORN

Instructor: Moutaa Amine El Waer

Email: moutaaamine.elwaer@utoronto.ca

Office: Department of Sociology, 700 University Avenue, 17th Floor

Office hours: By appointment

Teaching Assistant: TBA

TA email: TBA

Please take the time to regularly consult the page of this course on Quercus, to be aware of the announcements, clarifications and potential updates on this syllabus. Beyond that, communication in-class and by other means will be delivered consistently to ensure that everyone has the needed information.

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Toronto is located on Indigenous land. For thousands of years this land has been the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca and, most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The region is protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum, which is an agreement to share and protect the land and its resources. Across Turtle Island many Indigenous peoples work toward decolonization by resisting colonial practices and building international solidarity with all colonized peoples globally. I encourage you to learn more about the past movements and initiatives and contribute positively in their present and future struggles.

Course Description

This course has two goals. It aims to familiarize students with current challenges and dynamics within Arab societies. It seeks to help students develop a critical perspective on prevalent analytical frameworks such as essentialist and culturalist analyses applied to the region. To achieve this, we will use a controversy, conflict, or current event as an entry point to illuminate one or more dimensions of the society we are studying. The countries studied will vary during the semester to

reflect the socio-economic, cultural, religious, and political diversity of the region, as well as some of the common challenges facing these countries.

Prerequisites: None

Learning Objectives

There two types of learning objectives for this course, skills-based (1-5) and Content-based (6-8):

1. Develop critical thinking skills
2. Learn to discuss ideas and differentiate between opinion and argument
3. Learn to read scholar texts purposefully and make connections between them
4. Develop the ability to write in a scholarly and evidenced manner
5. Learn to present research findings using various tools (oral, written, and visual)
6. Moving beyond binaries and simplifications.
7. Acquiring a more nuanced and attentive understanding of the complexities of the region.
8. Putting the current issues facing the region into historical perspective

Session outline

The core components that form the backbone of each session are:

- **Group Work:** Collaborate with peers to discuss and develop reflections to share with the rest of the class or to advance your assignments, depending on the session's objectives.
- **Group Discussion:** Engage in a guided discussion, moderated by the instructor, focused on the week's content.
- **Closing Presentation:** Each session will conclude with a lecture of varying length, summarizing and reinforcing the essential elements covered.

This structure will be adapted and modified as needed during the term.

Evaluation Components

Type	Due Date	Percentage
In-class participation	Ongoing	15%
Reading Quizzes	week 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	21%
Creative Group project Proposal	February 12	5%
Two Critical reflection	February 19; March 12	24%
Creative Group project	April 2	35%

Individual assignments (60% in total)

In-class participation (15%) [every class] Individual

Participating actively in class activities is the most efficient way to learn the course content. Students are expected to read all the readings and participate in (group) discussions and activities which will occupy a significant portion of each session.

Your participation will be assessed based on both your attendance and your contribution to class activities. If you require any special accommodations for class participation, please notify me by email as soon as possible.

The grade is divided into two components:

- 6 points, simply rewards **attendance** in the 12 different sessions of the course.
- 9 points will be awarded according to **class participation** and to a **question related** to the reading of the week posted on Quercus, at least two hours before the beginning of the class.

All students benefit from an unjustified absence ticket that they can use without consequences on the final grade. An absence declaration is required to justify all other absences. Unjustified absence from any other session results in the loss of 0.5 points related to attendance and 1 point related to participation. It is not possible to post the question related to the reading of the week on Quercus for an absent student.

Reading Quizzes – 21% (3%*7) [week 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9]

Students will take **seven (7)** online reading quizzes on Quercus. The Quiz will be about the **reading and discussion of the week**. These quizzes aim to improve students' understanding of course content and develop their skills in analyzing social scientific concepts and data. Quizzes will become available on Thursday at 10:00 a.m. and must be submitted by 5:59 p.m. on Friday.

Two Critical reflections (2*12%) [February 19; March 19]

You will prepare two 800-word papers (excluding the bibliography), each focusing on a different issue discussed in class so far. Note that the two topics must be distinct from one another.

In each paper, you will present a critical reflection on one (or more) texts by connecting it to an experience and/or a personal thought. This connection may relate to the country in question, the theme discussed, or the class discussions.

Further details will be provided on Quercus. Papers must be submitted by 5:59 p.m.

Group Work (40% in total)

Proposal (5%) [February 12] Group

A 300-word document in which you explain the format of your creative project (e.g. App, Poster, audiovisual creation, Zine, works of art, pamphlet, short film, live performance, podcast, song, videogame, social game, etc.), the topic covered, why you think it is interesting to choose this

topic?, a project execution plan. More details will be communicated on Quercus as the session progresses. The proposal must be submitted by February 12 at 5:59 p.m.

Creative group project (35%) [April 2] Group

The Creative Group Project serves as the course's final assessment. Working in groups of 3 (or up to 4) members, students will collaboratively create an original project that reflects their collective learning throughout the course. The project will explore a country, theme, or topic covered in class. You are encouraged to think creatively about the format, which could include an App, poster, audiovisual creation, zine, artwork, pamphlet, short film, live performance, podcast, song, videogame, social game, or other forms. Several in-class sessions will be dedicated to activities that support the development and implementation of these projects.

More details will be communicated in class during the activities allocated to group work.

The final grade will be shared between the **project itself** (20%) and its **presentation in class** during the last session (10%).

Course Policies

Reading Materials

This course does not require a textbook. Instead, you will be assigned texts to read prior to each class. All assigned readings are accessible on Quercus through the Library Reading List. Additional materials can be provided upon request.

Website of the course

The course website on Quercus provides access to the syllabus, course materials, assignments.

Check Quercus regularly to stay informed about important changes in the course.

<https://q.utoronto.ca>

Evaluation Criteria

The university's evaluation standards are outlined as follows:

A) Excellent: Demonstrates strong original thinking, effective organization, the ability to analyze and synthesize, a superior understanding of the subject matter accompanied by sound critical evaluations, and evidence of a broad and comprehensive knowledge base.

B) Good: Shows a solid understanding of the subject matter, some demonstration of critical thinking and analytical skills, a reasonable grasp of relevant issues, and familiarity with the pertinent literature.

C) Adequate: Reflects a student making satisfactory progress in their academic experience, showing comprehension of the subject matter and the ability to address straightforward problems within the material.

D) Marginal: Displays some awareness of the subject matter and minimal development of critical and analytical skills.

F) Inadequate: Reveals little to no understanding of the subject matter, significant weaknesses in critical and analytical skills, and minimal or irrelevant engagement with the literature.

Please note that these are overarching guidelines and will be tailored to the specific requirements of each assignment.

Grade scale

A+: Above 90 ; A: 85-89 ; A-: 80-84

B+: 77-79 B: 73-76 B-: 70-72

C+: 67-69 C: 63-66 C-: 60-62

D+: 57-59 D: 53-56 D-: 50-52

F: 0-49

Deadlines

The assignments are due online via Quercus by 23:59 (11:59 p.m. EST) for the stated date.

Missed tests and assignments

Students who miss a paper deadline or a test will receive a mark of zero for that paper or test unless the reason is a circumstance beyond their control. **Within three days** of missing a paper deadline or test, students must send the instructor a request for consideration. Students must document their request with **one of the following:**

- Absence declaration via ACORN
- U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form
- College Registrar's letter (e.g., in case of personal/family crisis or emergency)

- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services

Students who miss the test or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

Accessibility

If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible. Please inform me of the situation as soon as possible so that I can arrange the necessary accommodations in time.

Email policy

If you have questions about your grades on the reading quizzes or the critical reflection, please reach out to the TA. If the TA is unable to address your inquiry, they will consult with the instructor for further clarification. Please allow 48 hours for a response during regular working hours (9 a.m.–5 p.m., Monday to Friday). If you haven't heard back within that time frame, feel free to send a follow-up email.

Use always your University of Toronto email and please, add the course code in the title.

For all other matters, please communicate with me directly whenever possible, as I prioritize direct interaction over email. I will be available after class to address any inquiries not clearly covered in the syllabus. If direct communication is not feasible, you may email me, and I will respond within three working days. As a general guideline, keep email exchanges brief and focused. For discussions requiring more depth, particularly regarding course material, I encourage you to visit during office hours.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND CLASSROOM ETHICS

1. Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Academic integrity is essential to education and research at the University of Toronto. Upholding values of honesty, respect, responsibility, and fairness within this academic community ensures that a U of T degree accurately reflects an individual's academic achievements. Review the University of Toronto's **Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters** (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) for details. Examples of potential offences include but are not limited to:

A. In written work (papers and assignments):

- Using another person's ideas or words without proper attribution.
- Copying text verbatim from a source (including lecture notes or study group materials) without using quotation marks.
- Submitting your own work for multiple courses without prior approval from the instructor (self-plagiarism).
- Fabricating sources or information.
- Citing references to materials you did not consult.
- Allowing someone else to submit your work as their own without your consent.

B. During tests and exams:

- Using or possessing unauthorized aids, such as a cell phone.
- Copying another student's answers.
- Allowing another student to view your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Altering a test or exam and resubmitting it for a re-grade.

C. Misrepresentation:

- Falsifying or altering required documentation (e.g., medical notes).
- Forging institutional documents or grades.

2. Ouriginal

All assignments submitted through Quercus will be reviewed using Ouriginal, a software integrated into the platform that applies text-matching technology to help maintain the University's high standards of academic integrity by identifying potential plagiarism.

Students who do not wish their assignments to be processed through Ouriginal must submit sufficient supporting materials (e.g., reading notes, outlines, rough drafts) alongside their work to demonstrate that their submission is entirely their own. Without these materials, their work will not be assessed.

GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Students are encouraged to make use of technology, including generative artificial intelligence tools, to contribute to their understanding of course materials. Students may use artificial intelligence tools, including generative AI, to enhance their learning or assist with assignments in

this course, **except** for the **annotated bibliography** and the **final paper**. In all cases, please be aware that you are responsible for the work submitted.

If you decide to use artificial intelligence tools, know that you must properly cite it in the appendix. This documentation should include the appellations of the used tools, how you used them (ex. what questions you asked) and in what form they were incorporated in your work (ex. copying identical paragraphs or sentences, paraphrased paragraphs or sentences, etc.).

To cite properly content created by artificial intelligence, you can consult resources provided by the library of the University of Toronto (<https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/c.php?g=251103&p=5296636>) or those published by many other institutions, available online.

Course Schedule and activities

Week 1 – January 8 - Introduction

Week 2 – January 15 – “Arab League”, “Middle East & North Africa”, “Near East”: What are we talking about?

In-class activity: how to critically read a scientific paper

Week 3 – January 22 – Depoliticized youth? (Saudi Arabia)

In-class activity: Choose your group

Week 4 – January 29 – Youth: a useful analytical concept? (Morocco)

In-class activity: Choose your project

Week 5 – February 5 – Women and the economy. Debt in Tunisian households (Tunisia)

Week 6 – February 12 – Food, State and security. (Egypt)

In-class activity: Finalise your proposal

READING WEEK (February 17- February 21)

Week 7 – February 26 – Rentier, corrupt and failed states? (Gulf States)

In-class activity: Teamwork on the collective project

Week 8 – March 5 – “Arab Spring”: revolutions 2.0? (Tunisia)

Week 9 – March 12 – The violence we live in: civil wars! (Syria)

In-class activity: Teamwork on the collective project

Week 10 – March 19 – Colonialism and the National question. (Palestine)

In-class activity: Teamwork on the collective project

Week 11 – March 26 – Feedback on the entire semester and preparation of presentations

In-class activity: Teamwork on the collective project

Week 12 – April 2 – Mini-Colloquium: Presentation of creative projects

Reading list

Week 1 – January 8 - Introduction

No Readings

Week 2 – January 15 – “Arab League”, “Middle East & North Africa”, “Near East”: What are we talking about?

- **Reading:** Michael Gasper (2020). Why Can't You Find the Middle East on a Map? In *Understanding and Teaching the Modern Middle East* (pp. 15-34). University of Wisconsin Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv17nmzqj.7>

Week 3 – January 22 – Depoliticized youth? (Saudi Arabia)

- **Reading:** Menoret, P. (2019). Learning from Riyadh: Automobility, Joyriding, and Politics. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 39(1), 131–142. <https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201X-7493843>

Week 4 – January 29 – Youth: a useful analytical concept? (Morocco)

- **Reading :** Bennani-Chraïbi, Mounia, 'Moroccan Youth and Political Islam', *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North*, Religion and Global Politics (2010; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Sept. 2010), <https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195369212.003.0004>

Week 5 – February 5 – Women and the economy. Debt in Tunisian households (Lana)

Reading: TBA

Week 6 – February 12 – Food, State and Security. (Egypt)

- **Reading:** Jessica Barnes (2022). "4. Subsidized Bread (with Mariam Taher)", in *Staple Security: Bread and Wheat in Egypt*, Duke University Press.

READING WEEK (February 17- February 21)

Week 7 – February 26 – Rentier, corrupt and failed states? (Gulf States)

- **Reading:** Hanieh, Adam, 'Capital, Labor, and State: Rethinking the Political Economy of Oil in the Gulf', in Amal Ghazal, and Jens Hanssen (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Middle Eastern and North African History*, Oxford Handbooks (2020; online edn, Oxford Academic, 9 June 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199672530.013.3>

Week 8 – March 5 – “Arab Spring”: revolutions 2.0? (Tunisia)

- **Reading:** HAMED Choukri, “Abeyance networks, contingency and structures. History and origins of the Tunisian revolution”, *Revue française de science politique*, 2012/5–6 (Vol. 62), p. 797–820. DOI: 10.3917/rfsp.625.797. URL: <https://shs.cairn.info/journal-revue-francaise-de-science-politique-2012-5-page-797?lang=en>

Week 9 – March 12 – The violence we live in: civil wars! (Syria)

- **Reading:** Baczko, A., Dorronsoro, G., & Quesnay, A. (2017). The Path to Civil War. In *Civil War in Syria* (pp. 84–100). <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108355322.005>

Week 10 – March 19 – Colonialism and the National question. (Palestine)

- **Reading 1:** Khalidi, R. (2022). Conclusion. In *The hundred years' war on Palestine : a history of settler colonialism and resistance, 1917-2017* (pp. 237-255)
- **Reading 2:** Charles W. Anderson. (2017). State Formation from Below and the Great Revolt in Palestine. *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1 November 2017; 47 (1): 39–55. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2017.47.1.39>

Week 11 – March 26 – Feedback on the entire semester and preparation of presentations

No Readings

Week 12 – April 2 – Mini-Colloquium: Presentation of creative projects

No Readings